



Congressman Boucher is joined by Delegate Ward Armstrong, Henry County Board of Supervisors Chair Debra Buchanan and Martinsville Mayor Kathy Winter for the groundbreaking on the federally funded Smith River recreation trail in Henry County.

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Groundbreaking for the Dick and Willie Passage of the Smith River Trail System

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March 31, 2010

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Martinsville, Virginia

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I am pleased to join you in Henry County today to break ground for the construction of a new phase of the Smith River Trail System, a project which will significantly advance Henry County's tourism economy as well as provide a new recreation opportunity for the County's residents.

Our region, Henry County in particular, possesses one of the state's best outdoor experiences, including the Smith River, Philpott Lake and numerous hiking, biking, backpacking, hunting and fishing opportunities. Henry County and Martinsville have been working together in recent years to develop a tourism economy that showcases the area's natural resources and benefits local entrepreneurs and residents alike.

In order to advance Henry County's efforts to enhance its outdoor recreation experience, I began working with local residents and officials several years ago to secure federal funding to construct the Smith River Trail system, a network of walking and biking trails that would eventually extend from Philpott Dam, through the Towns of Bassett and Fieldale, to the City of Martinsville.

In late 2005, we took our first step toward constructing this new trail system when

Congress approved my request for \$400,000 to advance the first phase of this project. And in 2007, a one-mile demonstration trail was constructed for the new trail system in the Town of Fieldale with funds provided at my urging by the Dominion Foundation as well as several private donations.

Today, we break ground on the Dick and Willie passage of the Smith River Trail System. This passage will extend 4.5 miles from Collinsville through Martinsville. The trail will be built on 4.5 miles of former Norfolk Southern railway that has been purchased by Henry County. When completed, the new trail will be paved, 10 feet in width, and include four trailheads and a scenic overlook at Mulberry Creek. A restroom facility will be constructed at one of the trailheads, located on Liberty Street. The trail will be maintained by the Henry County Parks and Recreation Department.

The total cost for construction of the Dick and Willie passage is \$1.3 million. In addition to the \$400,000 approved by Congress at my request, additional federal Transportation Enhancement funds have been granted for the project in the amount of nearly \$800,000, and the Virginia Tobacco Commission has contributed \$100,000 to the project.

Construction of the Dick and Willie passage is scheduled to be completed this Fall. I will continue to work with Henry County to construct future phases of the Smith River Trail System, which will connect the Dick and Willie passage with the Fieldale Demonstration Trail and with the Smith River Sports Complex to the East. I am pleased that these future phases will include a bridge over the Smith River, uniting the Fifth Congressional District represented by my colleague Tom Perriello with the Ninth Congressional District.

I would like to thank Tom at this time for his support of the Smith River Trail System. I look forward to our continued work to secure the necessary federal funds to complete the project.

I would also like to thank Debra Buchanan, Chair of the Henry County Board of Supervisors, and the other members of the Board for their vision and foresight in developing Henry County's tourism economy.

I also want to thank Kathy Lawson, the Mayor of Martinsville, for her support of the

project.

Kimble Reynolds serves both as a member of Mr. Perriello's staff and as the Vice Mayor of Martinsville, and I want to thank Kimble for his outstanding efforts on behalf of this project today.

Benny Summerlin, Henry County Administrator, and Tim Hall, Assistant County Administrator, deserve our appreciation today. They have both contributed countless hours to reach the groundbreaking we celebrate today.

I also want to thank Ellen Jesse, with the Dan River Basin Association, who came up with the idea to pursue the trail several years ago. Katherine Mull, the Association's Director, and Brian Williams also deserve our thanks today for their efforts on behalf of the project.

Finally, I would like to thank Derek Lyall, my Project Manager, for his outstanding efforts on behalf of tourism development in the Ninth District.

The groundbreaking of the Dick and Willie passage of the Smith River Trail System is an example of what can be achieved when citizens and government officials at the local, state and federal levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work, I want to thank all here today and offer special congratulations to Henry County residents who will soon benefit from this new recreational opportunity.